

REGION 3 — FINGER LAKES

C.K. MELIN

The spring of 1990 was warmer than normal, with average precipitation. Several cold fronts and snow at the beginning of March were followed by a slow warming trend beginning 8 Mar and continuing for a ten day period of record warm temperatures as high as 80°. This extreme warm spell caused some localized flooding as melting snow and ice jams caused swollen rivers and creeks to overflow their banks. By 19 Mar, the weather had become seasonable again and there were winter snowstorms throughout the Region. For the remainder of March, there were cold fronts and associated precipitation as expected during early spring. This pattern of cold temperatures and a few snowstorms continued throughout the first half of April. This weather hindered agricultural fieldwork, but good progress was made toward the end of April as warming temperatures helped to dry the fields out. Soil moisture, stream flow, and reservoir levels around New York State were rated as normal to above normal at the end of April. After 21 Apr, temperatures began to rise into the 70s and 80s, reaching record high temperatures on 28 Apr. Ithaca set a record 89° on the 28 Apr. The warm spell from 21-28 Apr marked the arrival of many summer breeding species, including flycatchers, vireos, and 12 warbler species. A total of 33 species arrived in the Region between 21 and 28 Apr. May was the coldest in five years, with statewide precipitation 225% of normal and higher than a 30-year normal for precipitation. The wet conditions delayed the alfalfa hay harvest and vegetable, corn, and oat fieldwork. May temperatures were cold until a warm front 9 May, but a cold front brought the coldest temperatures of the month by 10 May. Rains and cool temperatures were daily events until Memorial Day, when the weather dried out and temperatures were in the 80s.

Winter finches lingering through the season included Pine Siskin, Pine Grosbeak, and White-winged and Red Crossbill. Pine Siskin was reported nesting in Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary 31 Mar. At a banding station near Burdett, a Pine Siskin with eggs present in the oviduct was banded on 8 May (Gregoire). Pine Siskin may have nested at many other locations in the Region, as they were abundant all winter throughout the Region.

Most Region 3 waterfowl reports came from Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, as expected. The Eaton Birding Society confirmed many

of the reports contributed by Refuge staff. Waterfowl maxima there during March and the first weeks of April are listed below. Other water birds at MNWR included a total of 178 Double-crested Cormorant and 420 Great Blue Heron, and one Red-throated Loon and one Great Egret were also reported as well as a scattering of shorebirds including Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Dunlin, and Am. Woodcock. The trio of nesting Bald Eagles hatched two young this season. A pair of Osprey nested but their success was unknown as of this report. Refuge staff also reported that a patagial tagged Trumpeter Swan [from the Ontario reintroduction] was sighted south of Seneca Falls on 26 Mar. The swan stayed on a small man-made pond on private property until 11 May.

The Chemung Valley Audubon Society reported a great variety of waterfowl, waders, and shorebirds comparable to the diversity at MNWR but with fewer individuals at Eldridge Lake, Big Flats, and Corning Pond. Highlights were: Great Egret, Whistling Swan, White-winged Scoter, and ten shorebird species. Finger Lakes National Forest was also a springtime resting location for migrant shorebirds. Black-bellied Plover (max 23), Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Dunlin, and Common Snipe were all observed on FLNF in wet pastures from 29-31 May.

Spring is a season of many unusual bird reports, including accidentals, transients, and lingering winter finches. On 8 Mar, an adult white morph **Ross' Goose** was seen on Cayuga Lake at Stewart Park, among a flock of Canada Geese. The **Ross' Goose** was seen further north at Aurora on 10 Mar, with several thousand Canada Geese. Other water birds of interest at Aurora included a Red-throated Loon on 25 Mar, and a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** on 17 Apr (B. Mitchell, *vide* McIlroy). Cayuga Lake was the location for an adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** on 28 Mar and a second-year Iceland Gull on 25 Mar. At a Groton feeding station, an immature **Harris' Sparrow** was confirmed 11 Mar, where it was seen by many and heard singing during the days following. It had been present at the feeding station since November, according to the home owners, but had remained unidentified for months. The Chemung Valley Audubon Society confirmed three new records for Chemung County. These were: an adult **Sandhill Crane** in Horseheads from 23-27 Apr, a **Kentucky Warbler** at Tanglewood Nature Center 21 May, and a **Fish Crow** flying over TNC 26 May. The CVAS also reported the only swallow colonies in Region 3, including a Bank Swallow colony in Southport and Cliff Swallow nesting under Elmira's bridges. The

stream banks in Southport are the nesting sites of a few Rough-winged Swallow, as well.

Common Raven continue to appear in Region 3, and there were reports during March from Mt. Pleasant and Shindagin Hollow near Ithaca, as well as one near Elmira and one at Texas Hollow. On 1 Apr two were observed copulating at Finger Lakes National Forest, where they had been during the winter months.

John and Sue Gregoire run a bird banding station near FLNF and had banded a total of 123 species by the end of May. Dates of the transient species banded were: Fox Sparrow 23 Apr, White-crowned Sparrow 2 through 23 May, and Lincoln's Sparrow 22 through 25 May. Fifty and more Turkey Vultures migrated overhead during April, as well as an immature Golden Eagle on 25 May. Believed nesting in the area are a number of uncommon species including Common Snipe, N. Goshawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Long-eared Owl, Brown Thrasher, and Eastern Meadowlark. The Gregoires reported no Henslow's Sparrow this season, but were able to count nine young Am. Kestrel at their nestboxes.

During May, there was a single report of a Sedge Wren along the railroad tracks running through Cayuga Marsh (D. McIlroy, M. Sheperd). Along Fall Creek near Cornell University, both "Brewster's" and "Lawrence's" Warblers were reported during the first week of May. Other May reports of interest were one **Black Vulture** at Dryden Lake on 6 May (D. Evans) and several reports of Black Tern at MNWR.

On May 19, the Cayuga Bird Club completed a "Big Day" census of birds in the Cayuga Lake Basin, including resident, breeding, and transient bird species. The results were representative of birds throughout Region 3 and reflect the Region's variety of woodlands, farmlands, and wetlands. A total of 160 species of birds were seen, including 13 shorebird species and 24 warbler species. Black Tern and Fish Crow were the highlights of the day, as well as a **Yellow-throated Warbler** seen and heard in the Fall Creek gorge and Prothonotary Warbler at Mays Point Pool. One N. Saw-whet Owl was seen just outside the Cayuga Basin in Shindagin Hollow.

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Abbreviations: CL — Cayuga Lake; FLNF — Finger Lakes National Forest; HHSF — Hammond Hill State Forest; MNWR — Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; QCM — Queen Catherine Marsh; SWS — Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary; TMP — Treman Marine Park, Ithaca; YBSF — Yellow Barn State Forest.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: *intro.* Com. Loon: 36 Kashong Pt 6 May, 17 Big Flats 18 May. Pied-billed Grebe: max ten MNWR April. Horned Grebe: max four MNWR 31 Mar. Double-crested Cormorant: *intro.* Black-crowned Night-Heron: max 5 MNWR May. Great Egret: one QCM 4 & 26 Apr, four Big Flats 14 Apr. Trumpeter Swan: *intro.* Tundra Swan: max 90 MNWR Mar. Snow Goose: max 14,400 MNWR Apr. **Ross' Goose:** *intro.* Canada Goose: max 42,000 MNWR Mar. Wood Duck: max 480 MNWR Apr. Green-winged Teal: max 90 MNWR Mar. Am. Black Duck: max 550 MNWR Mar. Mallard: max 440 MNWR Mar. Gadwall: max 80 MNWR Apr, 20+ MNWR 7 Apr. N. Pintail: max 80 MNWR Apr. Blue-winged Teal: max 80 MNWR Apr. N. Shoveler: max 550 MNWR Apr. Am. Wigeon: max 150 MNWR Mar. Redhead: max 80 MNWR Mar. Canvasback: max 1800 MNWR Mar. Ring-necked Duck: max 290 MNWR Mar. Lesser Scaup: max 160 MNWR Mar. Oldsquaw: present all season on CL & MNWR. White-winged Scoter: six Erin P Station 21 Apr. **Barrow's Goldeneye:** *intro.* Com. Merganser: max 34 MNWR Mar. Ruddy Duck: max 50 MNWR 24 Apr.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: **Black Vulture:** *intro.* N. Harrier: widespread all season. Broad-winged Hawk: migrants widespread after 9 Apr. Red-shouldered Hawk: one ad TMP 15 Mar, two displaying YBSF May. Rough-legged Hawk: five FLNF 10 Mar, one Elmira Heights 11 Mar. Golden Eagle: *intro.* **Sandhill Crane:** *intro.* Virginia Rail: one Danby Jennings Pd 29 Apr. Upland Sandpiper: returned to traditional nesting site in Horseheads. White-rumped Sandpiper: two MNWR 12 May. Ring-necked Pheasant: present but local Phelps, Weedsport, FLNF. Com. Snipe: present but local in Big Flats, Weedsport, FLNF. Ring-billed Gull: max 400 Union Springs 10 Mar. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** *intro.* Iceland Gull: *intro.* Black Tern: present April & May MNWR.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: E. Screech-Owl: gray phase using Wood Duck nest box Union Springs March. Great Horned Owl: fledged young QCM and FLNF. Barred Owl: territorial YBSF. Short-eared Owl: one Scipioville 7 Apr, one TMP 12 Apr. Long-eared Owl: *intro.*; max four Dodge Road Ithaca all season. Whip-poor-will: single report Agronomy Ponds Ithaca 2 May. Red-headed Woodpecker: possible nesting Ithaca w. of County Hospital. Red-bellied Woodpecker: widespread but scarce. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: widespread but scarce.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Acadian Flycatcher: one Elmira Heights 22 May. Com. Raven: *intro.* Fish Crow: *intro.* Red-breasted Nuthatch: widespread in conifers. Winter Wren: possible breeding Shindagin Hollow, heard singing 5 May. Carolina Wren: widespread, several in QCM. Marsh Wren: present and nesting in Horseheads Swamp and MNWR. Sedge Wren: *intro.* N. Mockingbird: present FLNF but scarce elsewhere. Brown Thrasher: *intro.* Am. Pipit: reported 14 Mar through 16 Apr.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Philadelphia Vireo: one Pine City 16 May, one Caton 19 May, one Connecticut Hill 22 May. White-eyed Vireo: one Cornell Plantations 29 Apr. Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler: *intro.* Hooded Warbler: possible nester Hammond Hill and FLNF. Worm-eating Warbler: one

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Horseheads 12 May only report. **Yellow-throated Warbler:** *intro*. Prothonotary Warbler: *intro*. **Kentucky Warbler:** *intro*. Mourning Warbler: possible nester HHSF.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: White-crowned Sparrow: *intro*. **Harris' Sparrow:** *intro*. Fox Sparrow: *intro*. Lincoln's Sparrow: one SWS 7 May; *intro*. Snow Bunting: 800 to 1000 near Watkins Glen Race Track 1 Mar. E. Meadowlark: *intro*; 3-6 TMP all season. Rusty Blackbird: Corning Pd 8 Apr. Orchard Oriole: none. Pine Grosbeak: imm Southport 10 Mar, male Elmira 13 Mar, female at feeder Big Flats 10-13 Mar. Pine Siskin: *intro*.

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