

REGION 1 - NIAGARA FRONTIER

STEPHEN W. EATON

March was warm, wet, and cloudy. Temperatures were almost 5° above normal and it was the second wettest ever recorded at Buffalo. Nearly 6 inches of precipitation fell and snowfall was almost limited to one storm, 3 and 4 Mar, which left 8.5 inches at Buffalo and brought the season's total to 57.3 inches, about 30 inches below normal. In the Southern Tier counties, these snows turned to freezing rain and an ice storm which hit Allegany County hardest. The Pitzricks were without power for 3 1/2 days but carried on life the pioneer way. The ice cleared off Amity Lake on 18 Mar, two weeks early and Eaton's Pond opened on 23 Mar, one week early. On 28 Mar wind gusts at Buffalo were up to 68 mph and 80 mph in Albion. Except in the snow belt the ground was bare most of the month. April was the second wettest and fourth warmest on record at Buffalo. The average temperature for the month was 50.5°, the warmest since 1955, with seven days in the 70s, most during the last week of the month and bringing in many early migrants. The month's precipitation was about twice normal, 5.83 inches at Buffalo, and only a trace of snow fell. The last overnight freeze occurred on 12 Apr at Buffalo and by month's end Lake Erie had warmed to 43°. High winds occurred on 7, 10 and 15 Apr. May's temperature averaged 8.2° above normal at 64.3° in Buffalo, making the spring 1991 "the warmest spring ever", according to TV Channel 2, Buffalo. Precipitation at Buffalo totaled 3.1 inches, a little above normal but it was very dry at Amity Lake and in southern Cattaraugus County. Shallow Lake Erie warmed to 66° in Buffalo Harbor by 30 May, the warmest ever for that date. The last frost in Southern Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties occurred 5 May which allowed Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) to blossom in areas where usually they are frost-burned. By 20 May leaves were fully out on maples, beech, and birch and about two-thirds out on the oaks. This made warbler watching difficult. Most never seemed to make landfall in western New York. Woods flowers "were beautiful from early shad (*Amelanchier*), bloodroot and dogwood to wild cherry and apple", according to Vivian Pitzrick. Flowering was also abundant and almost two weeks early in Cattaraugus County, where blueberries, red raspberries and blackberries flowered 25 May. Cattaraugus County Cornell Cooperative Extension said, "corn was planted earlier than

usual. Hay was ready to be harvested a week to ten days earlier than normal... This will be the earliest this Agent can remember hay harvest being done in this area." Under Vineyard Notes Extension also noted, "Cluster counts [i.e., blossoms] are up at least 30%.... and one wise old grower has predicted that this will be the mother of all [grape] crops."

According to *Noteworthy Records* of BOS, two vireo species and fifteen warbler species arrived before the end of April, and perhaps a couple more were present, reflecting the unusually warm spring. The main flood of nearctic migrants peaked early, about 11-12 May, and as Terry Mosher wrote they went "over the top" with nothing approaching a "fall out".

The hawk watch near Ripley, in extreme southwestern New York, has started to produce some interesting counts, as are other points along the raptor migration routes. Hamburg, nearer Buffalo, and the Town of Yates, along the Lake Plain in Orleans County windward of Braddocks Bay, both have added counts.

Some interesting early nestings were noted by William Watson (*Prothonotary* 57(4):47-48); a Great Horned Owl apparently incubating 17 Feb in the Town of Tonawanda (earliest egg set from Region, 5 Feb 1933 at Cuba, Allegany County (*Kingbird* 11(2):88); a Great Blue Heron egg observed in nest, three feet off the ground, on Navy Island in the middle of Niagara River on 16 Mar (earliest egg date NYSBBA 15 Apr); Bald Eagle at the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge was seen in incubating posture on its nest 16 March (earliest egg date NYSBBA 16 March). Two pairs of Osprey are nesting again at the Allegheny Reservoir.

No great surge of rarities, as we saw last year, were reported during the period but Golden Eagle, a Ruff, a probable Hudsonian Godwit (not accepted by statisticians) and a Yellow-throated Warbler were exciting observations.

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Abbreviations: ARes - Allegheny Reservoir; ASP - Allegany State Park; BOS - Buffalo Ornithological Society; ChauL - Chautauqua Lake; DH - Dunkirk Harbor; GHSP - Golden Hill State Park; INWR - Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; NF - Niagara Falls; NR - Niagara River; PDBA - previously documented breeding area; PTwn - Pomfret Township CHAU; RHW - Ripley Hawk Watch CHAU; TNP - Tifft Nature Preserve, Buffalo; TWMA - Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area; WTSP - Wilson-Tuscarora State Park; YTwn - Yates Township ORLE.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: arr Lake Ontario off YTwn 5 Apr; one off GHSP 25 Apr. Com. Loon: arr Bear L CHAU 24 Mar; max 119 Somerset Twn NIAG 25 Apr. Pied-billed Grebe: two DH 2-30 Mar; arr two Dunkirk 17 Mar; max four E Aurora 22 Mar. Horned Grebe: arr eight Celeron 3 Mar. Red-necked Grebe: arr YTwn 1 Mar. Double-crested Cormorant: arr Amity L 10 Apr; max 98 DH 24 Apr. Am. Bittern: 7 Apr; one Sheridan Twn CHAU 18 Apr; two PTwn 19 Apr; one Hanover Twn CHAU 23 Apr; three TNP 8 May; three INWR 25 May, first real sign of increase. Least Bittern: arr TNP 21 May. Great Blue Heron: many wintered; migration max 36 RHW 27 Mar; first noted sitting on nest Motor I NR 15 Mar, *intro*. Great Egret: arr INWR 31 Mar; max three TWMA 2 Apr. Black-crowned Night-Heron: max 100 NF (Ontario P) 6 May. Tundra Swan: max 350 Oakfield Twn GENE 9 Mar. **Greater White-fronted Goose**: one TWMA 16 Mar; two YTwn 16 Mar (WD, mob). Snow Goose: arr 12 YTwn 3 Mar; max 55 YTwn 27 Mar. Canada Goose: max 35,000 Oakfield Twn 9 Mar. N. Shoveler: max 67 INWR 31 Mar. Gadwall: arr eight Celeron 3 Mar. Am. Wigeon: max 60 Oakfield 9 Mar. Canvasback: *none*! Redhead: max six TWMA 3 Mar; two TNP 17 Apr. Ring-necked Duck: max 350 TWMA, INWR 8 Apr. Surf Scoter: one YTwn 27 Apr. White-winged Scoter: 38 Shadagee NIAG 4 Apr. Hooded Merganser: one-two ad, 4-6 y Ward Twn ALLE 27-31 May. Com. Merganser: max 250 DH 16 Mar. Red-breasted Merganser: max 650 off YTwn.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: arr Eden Twn ERIE Mar; max 442 RHW 4 Apr. Osprey: max 24 RHW 23 Apr; *intro*. Bald Eagle: max four RHW 29 Apr; four reports away from nesting site and RHW Mar; five reports Apr; *intro*. N. Harrier: max 24 RHW 26 Apr. Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 314 RHW 23 Apr; 237 Hamburg Twn 25 Apr. Cooper's Hawk: five RHW 26 Mar; max over YTwn 7 Pr. Red-shouldered Hawk: max 127 RHW 21 Mar. Broad-winged Hawk: max 2,655 RHW 23 Apr; max 2,554 Hamburg 25 Apr. Red-tailed Hawk: max 250 RHW 26 Mar; 178 over YTwn 7 Apr. Rough-legged Hawk: one RHW 1 Mar; 12 YTwn 10 Mar; max 18 YTwn and Somerset 21 Apr. Golden Eagle: one Hamburg 18 Apr (RA, mob); two other reports Ripley and Pt Gratiot CHAU. Am. Kestrel: max 58 RHW 6 Apr; 37 over Carlton 6 Apr; 45 over YTwn 7 Apr. Merlin: one Buffalo 7-8 Mar, rare in winter; one TNP 14, 23 Apr; one Sheridan Twn CHAU 25 Apr. **Sandhill Crane**: four over RHW 17 Mar (JL, mob; no details). Upland Sandpiper: *none*. Whimbrel: 25 INWR 25 May. White-rumped Sandpiper: arr INWR 18 May. Purple Sandpiper: seven Goat I NF 7 May, late. Dunlin: seven INWR 25 May. Ruff: one Porter Twn NIAG 4 May (WD, WW). Wilson's Phalarope: one Porter Twn NIAG 4

May (WW, WD). Little Gull: 13 mouth NR 28 Mar. Bonaparte's Gull: max 2,800 mouth NR 28 Mar. Iceland Gull one Motor I NR 2 Apr. Black Tern: two INWR 10 May.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Yellow-billed Cuckoo: arr INWR 18 May; one Amity L 22 May. E. Screech-Owl: one Carrollton 9-31 Mar, 1-7 Apr, unusual locality. Snowy Owl: last Wheatfield Twn NIAG 2 Mar. Long-eared Owl: max three WTSP 27 Mar. Short-eared Owl: max ten Wheatfield Twn NIAG 25 Mar. N. Saw-whet Owl: max four WTSP 27 Mar; one Carrollton 7 Apr, 8 May; one TNP 7 Apr; one Charlotte 10 May. Whip-poor-will: two Sheridan Twn CHAU 27 Apr; one PTwn 16, 19 May. Red-headed Woodpecker: arr TNP 28 Apr, max four Pt. Gratiot CHAU 12 May. Red-bellied Woodpecker: one INWR 24 Mar; one Wales 31 Mar; vocal male Salamanca Twn 14 Apr, not regular Allegheny Valley; one Amity L. ALLE 12, 20 Apr; one Sheridan 13 Apr.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Acadian Flycatcher: arr INWR and Chestnut Ridge P ERIE 18 May (both PDBA); three PTwn 22 May (PDBA). Purple Martin: two INWR 20 Apr; one Somerset 21 Apr; no reports ALLE or e CATT; any Allegheny Plateau reports needed. Cliff Swallow: flock of 15 Salamanca 10 Apr (TB), very early; population along Allegheny River increasing with use of Rt 17 bridges crossing Allegheny River. **Com. Raven**: one Amity Twn ALLE 2, 5, 6 Apr; one Ward Twn ALLE 5, 8 Apr (PDBA); one ASP 12, 19 Apr. Tufted Titmouse: seven reports BOS Mar, eight reports Apr, 62 record max BOS 14 Apr count, 11 reports May, recovery from winter 1976 seems complete. Carolina Wren: four reports Mar BOS; five reports Apr, six reports May plus one Salamanca 6 May; 14 BOS 14 April count. Marsh Wren: one TNP four May, only other report TWMA 10 May. E. Bluebird: wintered several areas; 27 pairs nesting Amity L trail by 31 May (VP). Grey-cheeked Thrush: arr two Tonawanda Twn 10 May. N. Mockingbird: one Canadaway Creek NS 24 Mar; two Lewiston 27 Mar; one DH 30 Mar; one Salamanca 12 May. Am. Pipit: arr five Hamburg 19 Mar; max 150-200 PTwn 11 May.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: White-eyed Vireo: one-two TNP 5,8 May. Philadelphia Vireo: one Williamsville Glen 8 May. Orange-crowned Warbler: one GH SP 11 May. N. Parula: one TNP 5, 13 May; seven other reports Lake Plains, Alfred and ASP. Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler: one "Lawrence's" banded Farmersville Twn CATT 1 May (DC); one Buffalo 6 May (AH). **Yellow-throated Warbler**: one Jamestown 23 Apr (RS). **Worm-eating Warbler**: one Williamsville Glen 10 May (GR). Louisiana Waterthrush: arr Carrollton 7 Apr (SE). Hooded Warbler: arr Carrollton Twn 5 May. Yellow-breasted Chat: one PTwn 19 May; one Sheridan Twn CHAU 19 May.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Am. Tree Sparrow: last Four Mile Creek SP 21 Apr, late. Field Sparrow: arr Amity Twn ALLE 2 Apr. Vesper Sparrow: one Somerset Twn NIAG 21 Mar; one Springville 1 May; one Newstead Twn ERIE 29 May. Grasshopper Sparrow: arr Cambria Twn NIAG 4 May; two PTwn 11 May. Henslow's Sparrow: two INWR 21 May; one Alfred Twn ALLE 26 May, only

reports. Lincoln's Sparrow: one banded ASP 31 May (RM), very late. White-throated Sparrow: eight E Aurora 15 Mar; one Tonawanda 1 Apr; one-two Amity L 1-29 Apr, migration very light in southern tier counties. Red-winged Blackbird: 8153 BOS 14 Apr count, 37 year low (RC). **Brewer's Blackbird**: two Eden Twn ERIE 12 Apr (RA, mob); max six 13 Apr (WW, WD); two Eden Twn 28 Apr (GR, MG). Orchard Oriole: two Porter Twn NIAG 21 May, only report. Purple Finch: three reports BOS Mar, four reports Apr, nine reports May, all e and s Buffalo. Pine Siskin: two E Aurora 17 Apr; one PTwn 18 Apr; one Sheridan Twn CHAU 27 Apr. Evening Grosbeak: two-32 Amity L during Mar; 30-72 Wales during Mar; 28 Sheridan Twn CHAU 3 Mar; 72 on Mar; six reports e and s of Buffalo during Apr; six GHSP 4 May; two Sheridan Twn CHAU 16 May, late. House Sparrow: 1,665 on BOS 14 Apr count, 39 year low (RC).

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[This is the penultimate Regional report prepared by Steve Eaton, who will be stepping down after the summer season's report. On behalf of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, I am pleased to extend sincere thanks to Steve for the hard work he has done and the informative reports he has contributed to The Kingbird. Effective the fall season, 1991, the new Region 1 editor will be: Mr. Gerald R. Rising, 295 Robinhill Drive, Williamsville, New York 14221 — The Editor]