

REGION 4 - SUSQUEHANNA

MARY DOBINSKY

All three months of the spring 1991 were warmer than normal, and not just a little warmer, either! May was the hottest on record!! High temperatures March and April averaged about five degrees above normal. May's highs shattered records of nearly forty years at the National Weather Service Station at Link Field, Binghamton. March entered like a lion with record high readings on three of the first six days. Afternoon temperatures hovered close to 80° each day from 6 to 9 April, as much as 29° above normal. Early May had a few cold days but, after 10 May a large high pressure system over the eastern part of the nation blocked colder weather from moving in and the mercury climbed to 80° almost every day. Precipitation was about 0.05 inches above normal in March, occurring mostly as rain, and about an inch over normal in April. At Oneonta, 8.00 inches of snow in March and 2.5 inches in April brought the year's total snowfall to 35.00 inches, more than 20.00 inches below the usual. May rainfall was not only more than an inch below the normal 3.19 inches, but it all fell the early part of the month. Except for light morning showers on 14 May, there was no rain the last three weeks of May.

The growing season was up to two weeks ahead of normal all season. Both wild and cultivated flowers and shrubs bloomed early and in great clusters. The promise of abundant seeds and berries with the accompanying bugs and worms had to look encouraging to woodland birds building their nests. Not so fortunate were meadowlarks, Bobolinks and some grassland sparrows. Farmers started cutting hay in mid May, probably the earliest ever. One has to hope the birds started over in their nesting efforts or had chosen an abandoned field to raise their young. Corn was planted so early it looked as if it would be "knee-high by the Fourth of June!"

The most sickening episode of the season was the 4 May shotgun slaughter of 11 Great Blue Herons at a rookery in the town of Greene. A 50-year-old man and his 35-year-old brother have since pleaded guilty to the crime and were fined \$250 each.

It was an outstanding season for finding denizens of the marsh. In addition to the Great Blue and Green-backed Heron, our alert observers spotted a fantastic seven rare to uncommon species: Am. Bittern, **Snowy**

Egret (especially rare in spring), **Black-crowned Night-Heron**, **Virginia Rail**, **Sora**, **Common Moorhen** and **Am. Coot**. Following a mild winter with scant snowfall, March began with rivers open and free of ice or spring runoff. Lakes and reservoirs thawed quickly. Larger than usual rafts of diving ducks fared well in these conditions. Puddle ducks, however, didn't linger. Since rivers didn't overflow, there were no floodplain pools to attract them. The only exceptions were **Am. Wigeon**, spotted at many sites from 15 Mar to 1 Apr, and the ubiquitous **Mallard**, of course.

Good counts were reported for most hawks. **Harriet Marsi**, **Bruce Bozdos** and **Gail Kirch** noted 8 Mar as "a good hawk day." They counted nine **Red-tailed Hawk**, seven **Rough-legged Hawk**, maxima for the season, plus a **N. Harrier** and an **Am. Kestrel**.

May arrived to find excited birders full of anticipation. Hah! What a fizzle! There were no strong weather fronts. There was hardly any variation - just sun and heat. Some birds arrived early, but there was nothing to delay them, nothing to drive them off course. If their nesting destination was not Region 4, they sped onward. **Robert Miller** coordinated the annual **Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society** spring bird count 18 May. He reported, "The only strictly transient warblers were **Pine** and **Blackpoll Warblers**. The migrants had pretty much passed through." He was content that the 10 parties out found a total of 126 species, one of their better counts. The Region's seasonal count of 190 species was one of the highest. Unfortunate misses were **Horned** and **Red-necked Grebe**, **Merlin**, **Upland Sandpiper**, **Olive-sided** and **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**, **Marsh Wren**, **Philadelphia** and **White-eyed Vireo**, **N. Parula** and **Lincoln's Sparrow**.

Alan Holconde observed a **Red-headed Woodpecker** at a **Morris feeder** on 7 May both eating sunflower seeds and flying with them to a nearby maple tree, where he deposited seeds in the trunk, "behavior noted in material I have read about the bird." At least 30 **Black-billed** and **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** started moving into the Region by 16 May, probably drawn by the infestation of **Gypsy Moths** in **Broome County**. This is the second successive year for the destructive caterpillars.

Contributors: **Cutler & Jeanette Baldwin**, **Les Bemont (LeB)**, **Lois Bingley**, **Reynolds Bennett**, **Don & Judy Bell**, **Bruce Bozdos**, **Mildred Clark**, **George Chiu**, **Chad Covey**, **Marilyn Davis (MDv)**, **Sadie Dorber**, **Rick Dorber**, **Carl Eastwood**, **John Fritz**, **M. Ferranti**, **John Gustafson**, **Elva Hawkin**, **Nancy Hawkin**, **Lynn Kalis**, **Gail Kirch**, **Margaret Layton**, **Jay Lehman**, **Andy Mason**, **Harriet Marsi**,

Rick Marsi (RMA), Robert Miller, Jean Miller, Dave Messineo, Marie Petuh, Halladay Pierce, Steve Rice, Ivex Rowe, Roger & Marnie Schrader, Tom & Norene Tasber, Bill Toner, Weed Walkers of Broome Naturalist Club, Don Windsor, Jane Young.

Abbreviations: BPd - Boland Pond, Chenango Bridge; CRes - Cannonsville Reservoir; CVSP - Chenango Valley State Park; ChenF - Chenango Forks; ChenBr - Chenango Bridge; DOASSBC - Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society Spring Bird Count, 18 May; FHNC - Finch Hollow Nature Center; JC - Johnson City; NNM - North Norwich Marsh; OnRes - Oneonta Reservoir; OPM - Oneonta, Portlandville, Milford; SUNYNP - SUNY at Binghamton Nature Preserve; WPres - Whitney Point Reservoir.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: arr WPres 2 Apr; max and last six Otsego Lake 21 May, excellent count; 11 other reports. Pied-billed Grebe: arr WPres 24 Mar, eight other reports, last 19 Apr, good. Double-crested Cormorant: arr three WPres 24 Apr; five May reports, range expansion continues. Great Blue Heron: *intro*. Snowy Egret: one Apalachin Marsh 12 Apr (MP, JY), first spring since 1979. Green-backed Heron: 10 scattered reports, scarce. Black-crowned Night-Heron: arr BPd 18 Apr (MP, ML, JY), first since 1982. Tundra Swan: three reports of up to six birds CHEN 4 -8 Mar; singles TIOG, BROO; last six CRes 19 Mar. Snow Goose: five flocks BROO (JS), 200 over Norwich (CE), 80+ CORT, three WPres, all 17 Mar, big migration day. Canada Goose: arr and max 1,000 FHNC 1 Mar; five reports of goslings BROO, CHEN, TIOG. Wood Duck: four arr BROO 15 Mar; hen with nine chicks OPM 18 Mar. Green-winged Teal: arr BROO 29 Mar; max four OPM 3 Apr; only five other reports until 19 Apr, low. Am. Black Duck: max 25 ChenF 2 Mar (T&NT). N. Pintail: single BROO 2 Mar (T&NT), only report. Blue-winged Teal: arr BROO 29 Mar; max and last of six reports three 16 Apr, low. Gadwall: arr five BROO 2 Mar (T&NT); one CHEN report, often missed. Am. Wigeon: *intro*. Canvasback: only one TIOG Mar (RB). Ring-necked Duck: three arr CORT 6 Mar; 20 BROO 22 Mar; 26 OTSE 26 Mar, high count. Lesser Scaup: arr 20 CRes 19 Apr (HP). Oldsquaw: arr four OnRes 17 Apr (MD); max 34 Upper Lisle 29 Apr (MDv), high count. White-winged Scoter: five Upper Lisle 29 Apr (MDv), only report. Bufflehead: one WPR 24 Mar, first of 14 reports through 3 May. Com. Goldeneye: arr ChenBr 12 Mar; eight other BROO, CORT, TIOG sites Mar, good count. Hooded Merganser: arr BROO 1 Mar; max 30 BROO 29 Mar (T&NT); 10 eggs found in Wood Duck box S. Otselic 16 Apr, hatched and gone by 19 May (DM). Com. Merganser: max 120 WPres 24 Mar (MP); 50 BROO 22 Mar (HM, mob); ten OPM 3 Apr, very high counts; hens at three CHEN sites 20 - 23 believed breeding (DM). Red-breasted Merganser: arr WPres 17 Mar (MDv); max 20 there 29 Mar (T&NT), excellent count.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: arr OPM 13 Mar; max nine OPM 8 Apr, many sites through period. Osprey: 22 reports of up to four birds all areas until 20 May. Bald Eagle: five singles through Region Mar and Apr, good distribution. N. Harrier: arr BROO 2 Mar(JS); good counts until 3 May. Sharp-shinned Hawk:

arr BROO 5 Mar; 18 reports through 11 May, high count. Cooper's Hawk: several singles through period; one "beside road eating rabbit" 31 Mar OPM (IW). Red-shouldered Hawk: arr BROO 18 Mar (FHNC staff); one OPM 26 Mar; one BROO 12 May (GK), good count. N. Goshawk: one McGraw week of 7 Apr, one CHEN, only reports. Broad-winged Hawk: singles at 17 sites through period. Red-tailed Hawk: *intro*. Rough-legged Hawk: *intro*. Am. Kestrel: arr FHNC 1 Mar; pair mating CORT week of 7 Apr. Ring-necked Pheasant: only one TIOG 1 Apr (D&JR). Ruffed Grouse: only three Mar reports but common BROO Apr and May (JS). Wild Turkey: max 200 Harpersfield DELA 25 Mar (AM); 45 BROO 17 Mar (JS). Virginia Rail: one SUNY Binghamton Swamp 30 Apr (RMA). Sora: four NNM 4 May (DW, JL, CC), exceptional count. Com. Moorhen: three NNM 4 May; two BPd 13 May (MP), excellent count. Am. Coot: one TIOG Apr (RB), one BPd 13 May (MP). Killdeer: arr two BROO sites 3 Mar (SR, JS). Greater Yellowlegs: two OPM 21 May, only report. Solitary Sandpiper: last three OPM 16 May. Spotted Sandpiper: max six OnRes 5 May. Least Sandpiper: only two reports, last OPM 21-22 May. **Sanderling**: only one BROO 8 May (MP). Am. Woodcock: max four 21 Mar, more reports than usual of singles BROO, CORT, TIOG Mar and Apr. Bonaparte's Gull: arr CORT week of 24 Mar (JG); two sites TIOG Apr. Ring-billed Gull: arr BROO 2 Mar. Herring Gull: arr BROO 8 Mar.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Black-billed Cuckoo: *intro*. Yellow-billed Cuckoo: *intro*. Great Horned Owl: one on nest N Colesville 2 Mar (JS); nests with owlets three other BROO sites Apr. E. Screech-Owl: a "disoriented" owl rescued from Oneonta park road 1 May and later released, only report. Barred Owl: one BROO 21 Mar (T&NT); two BROO 11 & 19 May (JS), only reports. Com. Nighthawk: seven BROO and two OTSE sites, good numbers. Whip-poor-will: one DOASSBC 18 May; one Vestal Center 28 May (NH), previous report 1987 was first in many years. Chimney Swift: scattered reports of up to four birds through period. Red-headed Woodpecker: *intro*; one CHEN (*fide* JL). Red-bellied Woodpecker: at least five at BROO, TIOG sites. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: widespread late Apr-May. N. Flicker: arr BROO 28 Mar. Pileated Woodpecker: two courting OPM 16 Mar; six-eight sites/month through period, good numbers.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: E. Wood-Pewee: arr BROO 4 May (SR), early. Acadian Flycatcher: Upper Lisle 28 May (MDv), only report. Alder Flycatcher: max four sites OTSE 23 May. Willow Flycatcher: only four reports. Least Flycatcher: widespread arr 4 May. E. Phoebe: widespread after 25 Mar. E. Kingbird: six-seven sites a week after 1 May. Horned Lark: four reports of one to a few birds BROO, CHEN, CORT all Mar, scarce. Purple Martin: three BROO, one TIOG reports; ad with one FL behind Northgate Plaza 28 May (T&NT). Tree Swallow: mass arrival 28 Mar; reports of up to 125 birds 29 Mar; max 300 OTSE 11 Apr "bucking winds of up to 30 mph with utmost ease" (MD). Bank Swallow: small colonies (10 to 20 holes) Windsor & Lisle 29 and 31 May; one of 80 holes 15 May TIOG. Barn Swallow: 12 max 21 May; widespread. **Fish Crow**: one TIOG Mar

(C&JB); two Owego's Burger King 17 Mar (MP), one Chenango R BROO 24 Apr (MP). **Com. Raven:** single TIOG 28 Mar (C&JB); one "same area near Lapeer [CORT] as one heard all last summer by Joyce Tice" 13-15 Apr (BT). Tufted Titmouse: five DELA sites Mar, latest area of range expansion. Red-breasted Nuthatch: widespread Apr; pair nesting 24 Apr (R&JM). Brown Creeper: arr 8 Mar; max 10 BROO 13 Apr, unusually high numbers through period. Carolina Wren: two-three sites/month BROO, CHEN, TIOG, good numbers! House Wren: max six OPM 11 May. Winter Wren: seven sites OTSE and one CHEN after 4 May, limited area. Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr BROO 31 Mar; 20 reports of up to four birds Apr. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: seven sites OPM 16 and 25 Apr, last BROO and OPM 13 May. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: five CVSP 11 May (GC); three DOASSBC 18 May; nine other reports, very high. E. Bluebird: arr BROO 2 Mar, early. Veery: arr BROO 4 Apr, early; one other Apr, common in May. Swainson's Thrush: several there until 23 May (JS). Hermit Thrush: arr BROO 19 Apr. N. Mockingbird: seven Mar reports increasing to 20 May. Brown Thrasher: arr BROO 15 Apr; max three OPM 29 Apr & 11 May; on nest Windsor 19 May (JS). Am. Pipit: two OPM 4 May, only report. Cedar Waxwing: max and earliest 14 OTSE 18 Mar. Shrike sp.: two dates late Mar OPM, "probably a Northern but late dates raised our hopes for Loggerhead" (R&JM)

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Solitary Vireo: max 6 OTSE 10 May. Yellow-throated Vireo: arr Apalachin 30 Apr, early; at 17 sites May, good count. Warbling Vireo: at four widespread sites 4 May. Red-eyed Vireo: max six OTSE 28 May. Blue-winged Warbler: arr BROO 27 Apr; usual high numbers May, mostly BROO. Golden-winged Warbler: arr DOASSBC 18 May; one IBM Glen 29 May (WW); one T Fenton 23 May (JS). Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler: "Brewster's" on territory Morris 11, 12, 13, 27 May (JF); one BROO 28 May (GC). Tennessee Warbler: four reports BROO; last OTSE 24 May. Nashville Warbler: last 27 May. Yellow Warbler: max eight 11 May. Chestnut-sided Warbler: max 11 OTSE 28 May. Magnolia Warbler: only 12 reports, low. Cape May Warbler: five reports, last 27 May, low. Black-throated Blue Warbler: widespread after 1 May. Yellow-rumped Warbler: arr BROO 13 Apr; max 20 CVSP 2 May. Black-throated Green Warbler: arr 9 Apr (HM, mob), record early. Blackburnian Warbler: five reports, low. Pine Warbler: singles BROO 13, 14, 15 Apr (T&NT), CORT 5 May; DOASSBC, good count. Prairie Warbler: singles BROO 5, 7, 12 May; one OTSE 28 May "same site last seven years" (MD). Palm Warbler: singles BROO 1 and 11 May (T&NT), only reports. Bay-breasted Warbler: two SUNYNP 12 May (GC), low. Blackpoll Warbler: one TIOG and three BROO reports, last 26 May, low. Black-and-white Warbler: widespread after 19 Apr. Am. Redstart: arr early. Worm-eating Warbler: only two DOASSBC, often missed. Ovenbird: arr early. N. Waterthrush: widespread after 29 Apr. Louisiana Waterthrush: very early reports 10, 11 Apr (LeB). Com. Yellowthroat widespread after 28 Apr, early. Hooded Warbler: two DOASSBC 18 May, often missed. Wilson's Warbler: only one report. Canada Warbler: arr and max four OTSE 11 May.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Scarlet Tanager: max five 16 May. Rose-breasted Grosbeak: arr Vestal Center 24 Apr (SD), record early; widespread after 1 May. Indigo Bunting: reports scant. Rufous-sided Towhee: arr late. Am. Tree Sparrow: last two 18 Apr, scarce all season. Vesper Sparrow: arr two OPM 13 Apr; singles BROO, CHEN, very low. Savannah Sparrow: arr OPM 4 Apr; two CORT 7 Apr; widespread in May. Grasshopper Sparrow: arr BROO, CHEN 4 May; two other BROO reports, good. Henslow's Sparrow: two BROO sites 11, 21 May (ML), good. Fox Sparrow: arr BROO 22 Mar; three other sites CORT, TIOG, last 8 Apr. Swamp Sparrow: arr OPM 8 Apr; max five BROO 24 Apr. White-throated Sparrow: arr TIOG 3 Apr; widespread but numbers low. White-crowned Sparrow: max eight BROO 9 May; "very high count by DELA teams" DOASSBC. Dark-eyed Junco: max 100 BROO 14 Apr. Snow Bunting: last CORT 3 Mar. Red-winged Blackbird: max 1,000 BROO 11 Mar. E. Meadowlark: arr CORT 7 Mar. Rusty Blackbird: arr CHEN 31 Mar (DW); three TIOG 8 Apr, only ones. Com. Grackle: large flocks widespread after 1 Mar. Brown-headed Cowbird: max 30 CORT 1 and 3 Apr. N. Oriole: one Apr report with no date; max eight OTSE 16 May. Pine Grosbeak: singles at Oneonta feeder 2 Apr (MD) and Vestal Center feeder 27, 28 Apr (RD), only ones of the winter 1990-91. Purple Finch: widespread after 13 Apr. Red Crossbill: 20 OPM 29 Apr; six DOASSBC, only ones since three Dec reports. Pine Siskin: one JC 1 Apr; two other singles until last TIOG 30 May, rare all winter. Am. Goldfinch: max 80 Oneonta 3 Mar, declining Apr. European Goldfinch: at least one by Franklin observers mid March; several escapes seen there and other DELA areas winter 86-87 but have since disappeared. Evening Grosbeak: increasing in Mar, max 45 mid Apr, last DOASSBC, late.

7 Spencer Drive, Oneonta, New York 13820