

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

GERALD R. RISING

March, April, and May provided a roller coaster of weather conditions, most of them disguised by rather benign averages. According to the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Buffalo, the March temperature average was 31.6°F, down 1.5° from the norm; April was 43.8°F, down 1.6°; and May was 57.2°F, up 1.2°. Precipitation totals were: 2.9 inches, the norm, in March; 4.7 inches, up 1.6, in April; and 3.5 inches, up 0.6, in May. Not bad, but those records hide wide fluctuations between hot and cold, dry and wet. The balmy weather of the late winter extended until 10 Mar, the temperature for those first ten days 11° above average. The next two weeks were 10° below average. On 11 Mar, 15 inches of snow fell, leaving the ground covered for the rest of the month. Vivian Pitzrick reports that Amity Lake was clear of ice on 10 Mar, refrozen by 13 Mar, and still frozen until 10 Apr! Five inches of snow in the first week of April provided a final taste of that element and, except for a brief window from the night of 18 to 22 Apr, the month was unseasonably cold. The temperature never topped 60°F on any other day and the highs for the month were 3° below the norm. Then May continued the ride: the first nine days with seasonal temperatures, the next two weeks 8° above normal and very dry, the last week 9° below and equally wet. There were killing frosts during that last week of May, and Steve Eaton noted damage to several fern species as well as to Black Locust, White Ash, Black Walnut, American Chestnut (suckers), and Staghorn Sumac.

Because people like Rich Wells keep close tabs on so many of their nests (in his case 125 boxes), bluebirds may be considered an indicator species for nesting success in general. Consider what Rich has to say about them: "No factor has as much effect on nesting success of bluebirds as the weather. Cold wet weather makes it extremely difficult for the adults to feed (insects) and brood their young. This spring from 24 to 31 May (southern Erie and northern Cattaraugus counties) we had some unusually cold weather. 24 May started off with rain and damp cold: the daytime high was in the 40s. As the skies cleared, frost was reported on 25, 26, and 27 May; reports of 22°F on 25 May were common. During this time period I had 18 nests of bluebirds with young ranging from one day to two weeks of age. Thirteen of these nests were completely lost (all nestlings) totaling 53 young. Five nests were at least partially successful, losing ten young but fledging eleven. This is

about a 30% success rate which is well below my seven year total of 69%. Tree Swallow which did not have young at this time were nevertheless hit hard by the extreme cold. Sixteen nests and a total of 82 eggs were frozen out of 70 nests." As readers are too well aware already, Rich's sad tale will carry over into the next season.

Although that is the worst of the news, the migration itself wasn't all that great either. It seemed never to develop. Conditions were not right for passerine visits. The poor weather of late April with few southerly winds delayed some migrants, but the bland early May allowed them to pass over or trickle through in small groups. The Williamsville Glen spring coverage, now in its fourth year, attests to this with warbler peaks for both species and individuals well down from earlier years. Not all the news was bad, however. The Buffalo Ornithological Society April Count, mounted on 12 Apr this year and provided above average numbers and species counts, with 23 record highs for individual species, almost all nonpasserines. At least two good hawk flights did occur on favorable winds 19-20 Apr and 17 May, the unusual late flight coinciding with the B.O.S. May Count and providing a 56 year high raptor total for that survey.

Among the good records this spring, three are worth special note. On 22 Apr, Bob Andrie and others observed an **American White Pelican** over the Town of Hamburg. Don Endres later found two beautiful adult birds of this species in the Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area where they were seen by many others from 9-24 May. These were not the same birds found in nearby Canada through January; at least one of the Canadian birds was found dead. Eric Derleth and Cindy House turned up a **Hudsonian Godwit** in the Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area on 23 May. This is the first spring record for many years. Dean DiTommaso and Bill Watson heard the distinctive call of a **Laughing Gull** and saw this stray from the Atlantic coast over Times Beach in Buffalo on 9 May.

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Abbreviations: BH – Barcelona Harbor; BISP – Beaver Island State Park; BOS – Buffalo Ornithological Society; BOSAC – BOS April Count, 12 Apr; BOSMC – BOS May Count, 17 May; DH – Dunkirk Harbor; FMCSP – Four Mile Creek SP; GI – Goat Island, NF; INWR – Iroquois NWR; LESP – Lake Erie State Park; NF – Niagara Falls; NR – Niagara River; TNP – Tifft Nature Preserve; TIR – Tonawanda Indian Reservation; TWMA – Tonawanda WMA; WG – Williamsville Glen; WTSP – Wilson Tuscarora State Park.

Spring reports: **Red-throated Loon:** only one Cuba L 19 May (MP!). **Com. Loon:** max 45 T Hamburg 9 Apr (RA, mob). **Horned Grebe:** max 300 Celoron 1 Apr (RS). **Red-necked Grebe:** arr seven T Olcott and T Wilson 4 Apr (WD, mob); max 11 T Yates 7 Apr (WD, BP). **AM. WHITE PELICAN:** *intro*. **Double-crested Cormorant:** max 253 BOSAC, continuing their rapid increase. **Least Bittern:** arr one INWR 11 May (RC). **Great Egret:** arr two Chau 12 Apr. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** unusual city record one South Park L Buffalo 7 Mar (LS). **Tundra Swan:** max 292 TWMA 29 Mar (DH,WW,mob); last INWR 24 May (BB, DT). **Mute Swan:** arr two BISP 29 Mar (BC!), the local resident having died in a crash into power lines early in the period. **Greater White-fronted Goose:** only record two T Westfield 27 Mar (RS!, mob). **Snow Goose:** last Gene 17 May, late. **Wood Duck:** arr T E Aurora 5 Mar (LH), early; max 423 BOSAC. **Green-winged Teal:** max 340 BOSAC. **N. Pintail:** max 868 Oak Orchard WMA 7 Mar (MG, WW). **Blue-winged Teal:** arr one Waterport 21 Mar (WD, mob); max 330 BOSAC. **N. Shoveler:** arr one Burgeson Wildlife Sanctuary 29 Mar (RS, mob); max 155 BOSAC. **Gadwall:** arr three INWR 8 Mar (WD, DD); max 31 BOSAC. **Eurasian Wigeon:** only record one INWR 12 Apr (RC, MG, GR!). **Am. Wigeon:** arr three DH 1 Mar (JF); max 505 BOSAC. **Canvasback:** max for season 200 Celoron 1 Apr (RS). **Redhead:** max 24 BOSAC; last 23 INWR 17 May. **Ring-necked Duck:** max 1564 BOSAC; last 12 TNP 1 May (D&DS). **Greater Scaup:** max 1100 Celoron 1 Apr (RS); last two TNP 16 May (D&DS).

Lesser Scaup: max 1800 Celoron 1 Apr (RS); last T Cuba 22 May (MP). **Oldsquaw:** max 426 BOSAC; last 250 T Carlton 16 May (WD). **Black Scoter:** only report six Shadigee and T Somerset 29 Mar (DR). **Surf Scoter:** only report three Celoron 31 Mar (RS!). **White-winged Scoter:** max 78 T Somerset 21 Mar (WD, WW, mob), few reports. **Com. Goldeneye:** max 232 BOSAC; last two NF 15 May (WD). **Bufflehead:** max 869 BOSAC; last T Cold Spring 28 May (RS). **Ruddy Duck:** first six Celoron 1 Apr (RS); max 13 Bear Lake 25 Apr (LB, FR); last two INWR 17 May.

Turkey Vulture: arr 17 T Hamburg 3 Mar (RM, FR); max 583 T Hamburg 7 Apr (RM, FR). **Osprey:** early arr two Lackawanna 31 Mar (WD, DD!); max 52 BOSAC. **Bald Eagle:** max ten Cloverbank and T Hamburg 20 Apr (RA, RM, FR, mob). **N. Harrier:** max 120 BOSAC. **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** max 352 T Hamburg 19 Apr (RM, FR). **Cooper's Hawk:** max 17 BOSAC. **N. Goshawk:** only records one T Hamburg 18 Mar (FR!); one T Hamburg 14 Apr (RA!). **Red-shouldered Hawk:** max 57 Lackawanna 31 Mar (WD, DD). **Broad-winged Hawk:** arr one WYOM 12 Apr; max 4882 T Eden, T Evans, E. Aurora, T Portland and T Hamburg 19 Apr (C&RB, mob). **Red-tailed Hawk:** max 256 BOSAC. **Rough-legged Hawk:** max 52 BOSAC; last eight BOSMC. **Golden Eagle:** only records one T Stockton 18 Apr (LB, FR); one T Hamburg 20 Apr (RM, SS). **Am. Kestrel:** max 364 BOSAC. **Merlin:** one wintering Buffalo to 23 Mar (ES); arr one T Hamburg 6 Apr (FR); last E Aurora 29 Apr (LH); three other April records. **Wild Turkey:** max 120 BOSAC. **Com. Moorhen:** arr one TNP 17 Apr (MG). **Sandhill Crane:** only records one T Alfred 10 Apr (EB!); one T Wilson 21-22 Apr (BB, ES!). **Greater Yellowlegs:** max 57 BOSAC. **Upland Sandpiper:** arr one NIAG 12 Apr. **HUDSONIAN GODWIT:** *intro*. **Ruddy Turnstone:** only record one LESP 24 May (JF). **Sanderling:** one LESP 24 May (JF), six there 31 May; "irregular uncommon" spring transient (Beardslee and Mitchell, *Birds of the Niagara Frontier Region*) and not recorded in spring for over twenty years. **White-rumped Sandpiper:** only record one NIAG 17 May. **Purple Sandpiper:** two NF to 12 May (WD, WW), exceptionally late. **Dunlin:** four NF 7 Mar (DC), out of season; arr 14 BOSMC. **Short-billed Dowitcher:** arr seven TWMA 24 May (RW). **Com. Snipe:** max 100 T Eden 11 Apr (D&DS). **Am. Woodcock:** max 27 BOSAC. **Wilson's Phalarope:** only record two TWMA 31 May (WL, D&DS). **LAUGHING GULL:** *intro*. **Little Gull:** max 26 NR 13 Apr (GB); last BH 5 May (RS). **Bonaparte's Gull:** season max 4500 BH 30 Apr (RS); second high 4400 NR 13 Apr (GB). **Iceland Gull:** last Buffalo Harbor 9 Apr (RA). **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** late one BISP to 17 Apr (BC!, mob). **Glaucous**

Gull: max five BOSAC; last three BH 30 Apr (RS). **Caspian Tern:** max 41 BOSAC. **Forster's Tern:** only record one BH 30 Apr (RS!).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: arr three BOSMC. **Snowy Owl:** last Buffalo 15 May (M&SG). **GREAT GRAY OWL:** continued in the Town of Ellicott to 9 Mar. **N. Saw-whet Owl:** last WTSP 6 Apr (BP). **Whip-poor-will:** arr T Sheridan 3 May (C&RB).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: arr TNP 12 May (DD). **Acadian Flycatcher:** arr INWR 22 May (DR). **Tree Swallow:** max 2552 BOSAC, additional 4000 in nearby Canada. **Com. Raven:** family group in nesting area used several years ago WYOM 17 May (EB). **Gray-cheeked Thrush:** arr two BOSMC. **Am. Pipit:** max 175 T Eden 11 Apr (D&DS); only other date ten BOSMC. **N. Shrike:** last two BOSAC.

White-eyed Vireo: arr GI 13 May (BP). **Philadelphia Vireo:** arr WG 13 May (D&DS). **Blue-winged Warbler:** arr E Aurora 3 May (LH). **Golden-winged Warbler:** arr three TIR, one WTSP, one FMCSP 9 May. **Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler:** Brewster's type TIR 22 May (DR), in the same spot for three years; only other one Allegany Res 28 May (BC, RS). **Pine Warbler:** one T Somerset 8 Mar (WD, DD!), possibly overwintered. **Prairie Warbler:** arr T Amity 12 May (M&VP). **Cerulean Warbler:** arr WG 11 May (GR). **Prothonotary Warbler:** arr INWR 23 May (WW). **Louisiana Waterthrush:** only date six BOSMC. **Kentucky Warbler:** only report one GI 10 May (WD, DD!). **Yellow-breasted Chat:** only report one INWR 16 May (RC, DD!).

Field Sparrow: arr 15 BOSAC. **Grasshopper Sparrow:** arr T Pembroke 10 May (WD, DD). **Henslow's Sparrow:** arr three CHAU 17 May. **Fox Sparrow:** arr one T Carrollton 11 May (SE); last one TNP 26 Apr (WW). **Lapland Longspur:** last two T Porter 22 Mar (WD, D&DS). **Snow Bunting:** last 15 T Sheldon 17 Mar (OR). **E. Meadowlark:** arr T Warsaw 4 Mar (HK). **W. Meadowlark:** only record one T Pembroke 9-12 May (GS, mob!). **Rusty Blackbird:** arr E Aurora 3 Mar (LH); last T Clarence 16 May (WW). **Orchard Oriole:** arr T South Valley 17 May (BOSMC!), later nested in this area. **Red Crossbill:** only record one WYOM 17 May. **Com. Redpoll:** max 75 T Porter 1 Mar (WD, DD); last FMCSP 3 May (DC). **Evening Grosbeak:** last T Wales 9 May (OR).

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