

REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

MARY DOBINSKY

The Blizzard of '93 and the record rains of April were the weather villains of the spring season. A record one-day snowfall on 13 Mar ranged from 19 inches at Binghamton to 28 inches at Cooperstown, according to National Weather Observers in those communities. The storm boosted Binghamton's total snowfall for the month to 37.9 inches, twice the normal accumulation. In addition to snow, rainfall in March was 3.68 inches, an inch above normal. After this came "the wettest April in a century" according to Weather Service records at Cooperstown. Rainfall totaled 7.1 inches, more than double the usual amount. March temperatures averaged 28.8°F, 4° colder than usual. Very cold weather mid month offset milder temperatures early and late in the month. The mean temperature for April was 45°F, slightly above average. By contrast, May temperatures were pretty average, but rainfall of 1.99 inches was an inch and a half under normal. However, the first 12 days were generally sunny and warm, inducing no fallout of passerines. The rest of the month was mostly cloudy with strong northwest winds and unusually cold nights, not conditions to tempt migrant birds to linger.

Migration of water birds was late, generally scant, and over quickly. This was to be expected. Rivers and creeks were mostly frozen until late March. They thawed almost overnight. This triggered serious flooding that persisted off and on through much of April. Many ducks seen were in flooded fields 500 feet or more from the river bed. Exceptions and surprises brightened the season. Common Loon were even more numerous than last spring, which had been exceptional. An **American White Pelican** was the most amazing rarity of the season. It was spotted by Irene Tomek on a small island in the Susquehanna River near Binghamton the morning of 10 April. She alerted Rick Marsi, who arrived at the scene quickly. They noted not only identifying size and color but that the distinctive bill was bright orange with a large, striking protuberance, the determining feature of a breeding adult. Although most of our usual species of migrating ducks were seen, few arrived before April. Numbers were very low and, except for two stragglers, they were all gone by 20 Apr, a very early early departure date.

There were good counts of raptors, but the only suggestion of migration movement was at an old Tioga Center hawk watch site, tested in the 70's. In two hours on 24 Apr, Marie Petuh sighted five species including four Osprey, two Red-Shouldered and nine Broad-winged Hawks, all moving on a southwest wind.

Shorebirds were scarce and most transient species were missed. Good news was the first CORT record of Upland Sandpiper since 1982. The only other found in Region 4 in those 11 years is a nesting pair in BROO, present now for the seventh year. Harriet Marsi, Bruce Bozdos and Gail Kirch were excited by a white-winged gull at IBM Pond, Owego, on 12 Apr which they identified as a first year Iceland Gull. "We had a good view for three to five minutes and noted definitely the light look, white wing tips and black bill. Size was about that of a Herring Gull." The three hoped others had seen the bird to confirm their identification.

While high water level was a problem in the valleys, snow cover persisted at higher elevations. This delayed April arrival dates for some of the ground nesters, but most passerines were pretty much on time. An exception was a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher which arrived early at Tom and Norene Tasber's home in Triangle on 1 May. He must have realized he was ahead of schedule for he lingered until 18 May before resuming his flight north. Continued concern for Veery and Wood Thrush was expressed by Bob Miller, whose careful bird records date back nearly 40 years. "We have had one to three pairs of each species every year since 1954 along our road" (referring to about a half-mile of highway near Portlandville). "This year we have none," he wrote. Dave Messineo questioned whether Hermit Thrush were moving to lower elevations. "Many Otselic River Valley areas of Wood Thrush domain are now shared by Hermit Thrush," he wrote. Warbler migration was early and most birds are believed to have overshot the Region. Of the transient warblers, only Cape May, Pine and Blackpoll were listed on the 25th annual Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society Spring Count on 22 May, and there was only one bird of each species. Tennessee Warbler was the one transient that usually figured high in Region 4's spring report. On the 1981 DOAS count, 37 were reported. Their 1982 count yielded 38. That same year, 102 Tennessee Warbler were banded in BROO. In 1985 a record 600 were banded in TIOG. This year the Region had only three singles! Last year there were but five! Other warbler species were never seen here in such high numbers, at least in the last decade, so their decline, if any, is not too noticeable. Grassland sparrows continued to be scarce. Among

winter finches who were late returning to their northern homes was a pair of courting Pine Grosbeak. They were observed at a CORT Feeder April 12, 13 and 15. Ned Brinkley reported the sighting as submitted by Robert Silberman, an older student in his Field Ornithology Class at Cornell. "His excellent field notes," wrote Ned, "described the pair engaged in feeding, display and even courtship ritual (with fluttering wings, ritual feeding)." There are no known nesting records in New York for Pine Grosbeak. The winter influx of Purple Finch continued through 2 April when the last flock of 50 birds was seen at Morris.

Rarities for the season included **Am. White Pelican**, Peregrine Falcon, Iceland Gull, **Black-headed Grosbeak** and **Yellow-headed Blackbird**. Species missed were Canvasback, Redhead, Black Scoter, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Worm-eating Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Henslow's Sparrow and Rusty Blackbird. The total of 193 species plus one hybrid was a record high count, at least since 1979. The previous high was 191 species in 1992 and 1979. Some counts from regionally conducted North American Migration Counts, held 8 May, are included in this report. This editor regrets that space limits prevent using all the informative comments found in observers' reports. These notes are still most helpful in assessing a season. Thanks!

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Abbreviations: ChBr - Chenango Bridge; ChFk - Chenango Forks; CVSP - Chenango Valley State Park; DOASSC - Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society Spring Count, 22 May; FHNC - Finch Hollow Nature Center; OPM - Oneonta, Portlandville, Milford; NAMC - North American Migration Count, 8 May; WPR - Whitney Point Reservoir.

Spring reports: **Pied-billed Grebe:** one OTSE 22 Mar; one CHEN 24 Mar; one TIOG Apr, scarce. **Horned Grebe:** only one Binghamton 5 Apr (MDv). **Red-necked Grebe:** arr Mead Pd CHEN 18 Apr; last seen 15 May

(DW), only report. **AM. WHITE PELICAN:** *intro*. **Double-crested Cormorant:** max 24 Dean's Pd 24 Apr (MDv), record high. **Am. Bittern:** one CORT 2 May (BT); one CHEN 20 May (DM), often missed. **Great Blue Heron:** max 27 at rookery Route 17 west of Owego TIOG (G&EM). **Green-backed Heron:** 12 widespread reports, good count. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** four Otselic 15 Apr (DM), "first in this area." **Tundra Swan:** only one TIOG 7 Mar (C&JB). **Mute Swan:** arr two BROO 21 May (HM, mob); one ChBr 23 to 26 May (MDv); one TIOG. **Snow Goose:** only reports Tiog Mar/Apr, scarce. **Canada Goose:** "pairs breeding on most local ponds CHEN one pair with five y 25 May" (DM). **Wood Duck:** max six BROO 8 Apr and CHEN 26 May; hen with five y BROO 30 May. **Green-winged Teal:** two BROO sites 5 Apr (ML); max seven WPR 18 Apr (DM). **Am. Black Duck:** max 11 DELA 30 Mar (ML). **Mallard:** hen on 10 eggs CORT 2 May; hen 10 y Otego 20 May. **N. Pintail:** two Oneonta 20 Mar; two BROO 8 Apr, only reports. **Blue-winged Teal:** max eight WPR 18 Apr; seven ChBr 6 Apr; three singles, scarce. **N. Shoveler:** only report BROO 5 Apr, sometimes missed. **Gadwall:** pair Oneonta 13 Apr, only report. **Am. Wigeon:** max and last four WPR 18 Apr; three earlier Apr reports. **Ring-necked Duck:** max 30 ChFk 5 Apr and OPM 9 Apr. **Greater Scaup:** max 12 Binghamton 30 Mar; one TIOG 3 Apr. **scaup, species:** singles two BROO sites 2 Mar (WW). **Oldsquaw:** pair Plymouth Res 25 Apr (DM) only report. **Bufflehead:** arr BROO 2 Mar (WW); seven Apr reports, one May. **Hooded Merganser:** max 14 OPM and 12 BROO 6 Apr. **Com. Merganser:** max 15 Otselic R 1 Mar; one entering probable nest hole in dead elm tree several mornings May (DM). **Red-breasted Merganser:** arr CHEN 21 Mar (DW); three BROO 5 Apr (T&NT); four CORT 24 Apr (NT); two others, high count.

Turkey Vulture: widespread after 23 Mar, max ten. **Osprey:** 17 widespread through 22 May, max four, good numbers. **Bald Eagle:** max six Deposit to Walton 30 Mar (ML, AC, CF); one 3 and 5 Mar Susquehanna R OPM (IW); two feeding on dead deer Bovina 28 Mar (SMcP); one Susquehanna R BROO, TIOG early Mar, unusual at so many locations. **N. Harrier:** arr BROO 8 Mar. **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** 22 widespread reports through 15 May, high count. **Cooper's Hawk:** at Binghamton feeder to 11 Mar (SR); ten reports afield to 15 May. **N. Goshawk:** one McGraw perched in tree near feeder 13 Mar. **Red-shouldered Hawk:** arr OPM 23 Mar; one Morris 4 Apr; two at three BROO sites Apr, high count. **Broad-winged Hawk:** *intro*. **Rough-legged Hawk:** six March reports, last CHEN 29 Mar. **Golden Eagle:** only one DOASSC 22 May. **Am. Kestrel:** max 14 CORT 8 May. **Peregrine Falcon:** TIOG 25 Apr

(C&JB), rare in spring. **Ring-necked Pheasant**: max three CORT 5 May (BT); nine other reports, high count. **Ruffed Grouse**: good counts late Apr, May. **Wild Turkey**: max 120 Harpersfield DELA 7 Mar (AM). **N. Bobwhite**: singles FHNC 21 Apr; BROO 3 May (HM); two TIOG sites May (LBi, G&EM), a treat even if escapees. **Com. Moorhen**: only one SUNY Nature Preserve Binghamton. **Killdeer**: max 20 BROO 26 Mar; ad and four y OPM 22 May. **Greater Yellowlegs**: only one BROO 30 Apr. **Solitary Sandpiper**: four widespread singles 15 May; eight others last 26 May, scarce. **Upland Sandpiper**: one McGraw 2 May (BT), *intro*. **Least Sandpiper**: only one CHEN 15 May (DW). **Com. Snipe**: singles two OTSE sites, one CORT, one TIOG Apr; one 22 May, scarce. **Am. Woodcock**: max four displaying Morris 5 Apr (JF). **Bonaparte's Gull**: one Owego 11 Apr (C&JB); one Homer 21 Apr (JG); three 22 May DOASSC, high count. **Ring-billed Gull**: max 100 in flooded field IBM P 30 Mar. **Herring Gull**: max 25 CHEN 8 May. **Iceland Gull**: *intro*.

Black-billed Cuckoo: two BROO sites 11 May; one OPM 22 May; one TIOG, low. **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**: two DOASSC; one BROO 30 May, Gypsy Moth infestation of last two years ended. **E. Screech-Owl**: one OPM 14 Apr; one TIOG May, only reports. **Great Horned Owl**: one or two/week Franklin Mt (CV); six others. **Barred Owl**: one BROO Apr; five widespread reports May, max two. **N. Saw-whet Owl**: one Candor Mar/Apr (R&RP); one found dead Owego (G&EM). **Com. Nighthawk**: two Binghamton singles; one Tioga, scarce. **Chimney Swift**: three Apr reports, widespread May, max a scant two. **Red-bellied Woodpecker**: two TIOG Mar; one TIOG and one Vestal, May, low. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**: max 10 TIOG 8 May (JS). **Pileated Woodpecker**: well reported through period.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: one DOASSC; one Otselic 26 May, often missed. **Acadian Flycatcher**: only one Hawkins Pd Windsor 7 May (WW), not seen every spring. **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**: *intro*. **Purple Martin**: three TIOG reports from 24 Apr; two DOASSC, scarce. **Horned Lark**: ten widespread reports, max 50; last CORT 15 May. **Fish Crow**: two building nest second year in a row Hickories P TIOG 8 Apr (C&JB). **Carolina Wren**: pair fledged five y Owego May (C&JB); fewer winter survivors. **Marsh Wren**: only one CHEN 15 May (DW). **Golden-crowned Kinglet**: max eight CHEN Mar (DM). **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**: max 25 BROO 1 May. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**: pair building nest BROO 10 May (HM, mob); max four DOASSC; three CVSP 8 May; two singles, very high count. **E. Bluebird**: good nesting season anticipated from early

reports. **Swainson's Thrush**: pair Franklin Mt 11 May (CV); several BROO 12 May (JS); last one DOASSC, numbers low. **N. Mockingbird**: only seven May reports, population decline indicated. **Am. Pipit**: at least six near Sherburne 6 May (DW), only report. **Cedar Waxwing**: max 130 feeding on Viburnum fruits McGraw 16 Apr (BT). **N. Shrike**: last Marathon feeder (Cort) 7 Mar (RR).

Solitary Vireo: max ten OPM 10 May. **Philadelphia Vireo**: two BROO 9 May (MP), often missed. **Warbling Vireo**: pair building nest BROO 8 May. **Blue-winged Warbler**: 21 widespread reports, max three, compares well to 20 reports 1983. **Golden-winged Warbler**: max two DOASSC, low. **Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler**: Brewster's type "interacting with Golden-winged" T Union 16 May (MP); one Triangle 30 May (T&NT). **Tennessee Warbler**: *intro*. **Nashville Warbler**: eight reports, max two, scarce. **N. Parula**: one Franklin Mt 5 and 10 May, uncommon last few years. **Yellow Warbler**: max 17 CORT NAMC. **Chestnut-sided Warbler**: max 14 OPM and Otselic 14 May. **Cape May Warbler**: max three BROO where "discovered new site for good migration" (MP). **Black-throated Blue Warbler**: max five Otselic and four BROO 9 May. **Yellow-rumped Warbler**: max 35 Arnold L OTSE 3 May. **Pine Warbler**: singles Otselic 5 May; DOASSC. **Prairie Warbler**: max six on two of eight reports, good numbers. **Palm Warbler**: three singles 17 to 24 Apr. **Bay-breasted Warbler**: one Franklin Mt 10 May; one T Union 16 May, scarce. **Blackpoll Warbler**: "several" Otselic 20 to 27 May max six, good count. **Black-and-white Warbler**: 22 reports after 20 Apr max two, some decline. **Am. Redstart**: max four BROO 9 May, scarce. **Wilson's Warbler**: only one Otselic 27 May. **Canada Warbler**: max seven OPM 22 May.

Scarlet Tanager: max eight OPM 22 May. **BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK**: female TIOG feeder 19 to 31 May (H&SO'C, mob, NYSARC), Regional first. **Indigo Bunting**: record early arr Oneonta feeder 26 and 28 Apr (EC). **Rufous-sided Towhee**: max ten BROO 29 Apr, declining numbers. **Am. Tree Sparrow**: last 24 Apr. **Vesper Sparrow**: max four DOASSC; one BROO 27 May, scarce. **Field Sparrow**: max 20 Otselic 23 Apr. **Savannah Sparrow**: max 12 Otselic 16 Apr; several BROO May, scant elsewhere. **Grasshopper Sparrow**: only one Binghamton 25 Apr through period (SR). **Fox Sparrow**: six widespread reports 27 Mar to 14 Apr max three. **Lincoln's Sparrow**: only two Otselic 7 and 11 May. **White-throated Sparrow**: max 12 Franklin Mt 21 Apr. **White-crowned Sparrow**: one TIOG Apr; max and last four DOASSC, scarce. **Lapland Longspur**: one Owego 7 Mar (C&JB), uncommon. **Snow Bunting**: last Oneonta 2 Mar. **Bobolink**: max nine CORT

NAMC; "fewer birds in a flock" (MD). **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD**: imm
SUNY Nature Preserve 13 May "perched on a cattail about 12 feet away
and remained quite a long time" (I&RT); first since 1984, third report in
14 years. **N. Oriole**: max 10 two BROO sites 8 May. **Pine Grosbeak**: *intro*.
Purple Finch: *intro*. **Red Crossbill**: max 25 near Preston CHEN 24 May
(DW); singles Otselic 18 Mar and Pharsalia 20 Mar "very orange
subspecies" (DM). **Pine Siskin**: five widespread reports, very scarce all
year. **Am. Goldfinch**: large flocks to mid April, max 80. **Evening
Grosbeak**: five Otselic 16 Mar, only report, scarce all year.

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