

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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March was seasonal with a lack of extremes. Temperatures and precipitation were both normal for the month. The gradual warming permitted the deep snowpack to run off in safe quantities. However, the Region's ponds and lakes, deeply frozen from the bitter winter, remained mostly closed. As a result, the waterfowl migration was two weeks late. A flight of 1238 Tundra Swan past the Lakeside Cemetery hawk watch in the Town of Hamburg on 31 Mar underscores just how backed up this group was. The traditionally favored Iroquois NWR had only small numbers in the open edges of its pools. Most waterfowl flew right over to the Lake Ontario plain, where shallower puddles in fields thawed more quickly. Similarly, good numbers and variety were found in the fields of CATT. A warm spell 22 to 24 Mar pushed 1661 raptors by Lakeside Cemetery in the Town of Hamburg ERIE, including an impressive 928 Turkey Vulture. Frances Rew, who monitored this site with Barbara Walker, reported that the March total of over 2000 raptors was just short of last year's record.

April was warmer and wetter than usual. Temperatures averaged 3°F above normal and precipitation was 1.15 inches higher. However, it was not until the month's end that the ice finally disappeared from Lake Erie. Inland, Vivian Pitzrick in ALLE noted ice cover well into April on Amity Lake while Steve Eaton remarked that his pond in CATT was not ice free until 12 Apr, the second latest date in 40 years. Despite several days of favorable winds, the hawk flights at Lakeside Cemetery were very poor. The maximum number of Broad-winged Hawk was only 893 on 25 Apr. Even more galling to the observers there were the excellent days enjoyed by counters on Lake Ontario just east and west of the Region. Speculation as to the reason for the poor flights centered on Lake Erie's persistent ice pack, which pushed birds inland. However, this does not explain why the same conditions in March produced very different results. Mild weather on 24 to 27 Apr produced a strong early push of neotropical migrants including three record early dates. Sixteen species of warblers and four species of vireos were recorded on these dates.

Burt Schweigert noted a fallout on 3 Apr in CATT. Warm southerly winds overnight changed to northerly with rain resulting in the following maxima for the season of Common Loon, Pectoral Sandpiper, Am. Pipit, and Vesper Sparrow in addition to uncountable numbers of Red-winged Blackbird and Am. Robin.

Cool and cloudy weather caused by a series of cold fronts kept the migration to a trickle during the first half of May. Birders held their breath, waiting for the explosion that just had to follow. Overnight on 15

May, the temperature was mild and the winds light and southerly. It was the day of the annual B.O.S. May Bird Count. The results were spectacular - for some. In general, the Region to the north and east of Buffalo had a fallout. Specific areas mentioned with warblers tallied were Goat Island (21 species), Fort Niagara (18 species), Wilson-Tuscarora SP (20 species), Williamsville Glen (over 100 individual warblers), and Iroquois NWR. Light rain at dawn prevented the birds from flying over but the rain's intensity increased and did not let up until late afternoon. This prevented the birders from being as thorough as they wanted to be. How many more birds went undetected? May ended with more seasonal weather. Take away the period 15 to 19 May and it was a lousy month for observing the passerine migration.

The 1994 B.O.S. April Bird Count was held on 10 Apr and compiled by Richard Collins. The B.O.S. counts include the adjacent Niagara Peninsula of Ontario, about ten percent of the total area, so the data does not reflect purely Region 1 trends. A total of 137 species were recorded, which is about average. Record high counts were set for Red-throated Loon, Common Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, White-winged Scoter, Wild Turkey, Eastern Screech-Owl, Barred Owl, and Tufted Titmouse. Other significantly high counts included Horned Grebe, Great Egret, Lesser Yellowlegs, Eastern Phoebe, and Common Redpoll. There were no record lows, but significant low totals were had for Red-shouldered Hawk, Great Horned Owl, American Robin, European Starling, White-throated Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, and American Goldfinch. The count highlights were a Eurasian Wigeon and a count first Forster's Tern.

The 1994 B.O.S. May Bird Count on 15 May was compiled by Michael Hamilton, Lynne Landon, and Terry Yonker. The 199 species, two below the ten-year average, plus one hybrid included record high counts for Double-crested Cormorant, Lesser Yellowlegs, Caspian Tern, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, and Palm Warbler. Other positives were Wild Turkey, Barred Owl, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and White-crowned Sparrow. Although there were no record lows, but totals for Blue-winged Teal, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Common Nighthawk, Veery, Brown Thrasher, and Indigo Bunting were on the down side. Exciting finds included a *Yellow-headed Blackbird* and a Connecticut Warbler.

Although data from these counts can be misleading, they do have a long history and some of the results cannot be ignored. The increases of Double-crested Cormorant and Caspian Tern are well-known and widespread while Wild Turkey, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Tufted Titmouse have been increasing locally. Like many of the waterfowl

species, Blue-winged Teal has been in widespread decline. Increases in Lesser Yellowlegs and Barred Owl and decreases in Red-shouldered Hawk and Great Horned Owl are indicated by both counts. These are new trends which deserve continued monitoring. Surprisingly down for two of the last three counts is Brown-headed Cowbird. If this trend holds, this might suggest the sobering idea that there are fewer hosts to rear this parasite's young.

The Nature Conservancy and the Natural Heritage Program conducted the second and probably final year of the Lake Ontario Migratory Bird Project. Kris Agard was the project coordinator. Results from the first year suggest that neotropical migrants show a significant preference for forested, as opposed to brushy habitat and further, that sites on or near the shoreline of Lake Ontario are favored over those which are two miles inland. This is important data to justify conservation of the forests along Lake Ontario for this group of birds. Some of the more interesting finds by birders doing the counts were Orchard Oriole and Peregrine Falcon in NIAG. Near one survey point on the Niagara-Orleans Countyline Road this writer(!) located a Reeve on 30 Apr. The following day Harper(!) could not find the Reeve but found a Ruff instead! Both birds were last seen on 4 May. This same survey point held a Sedge Wren for Robert Wagner later in the season.

After the record flight of Red-throated Loon on Lake Ontario last fall, a good return flight of 51 birds was noted on 10 Apr but none was recorded after that date. Perhaps more unusual were the inland sightings - two at Allegheny Res CATT on 10 Apr and one at Rushford Lake CATT on 29 May. Red-necked Grebe appeared in record numbers in the winter period but the record was really shattered in April. On 8 Apr Morgante counted 175 on Lake Ontario off Shadigee ORLE; the following day this writer found none there. Instead the birds were off the Town of Somerset NIAG where 235 were counted. This species was more widespread than ever inland though usually in just ones and twos.

A pair of adult Bald Eagle were observed by Tim Baird to show strong interest in a nest used last year by Osprey. He watched the eagles hold steadfast against the fury of the Osprey and saw them add sticks to the nest on a later date. Nesting was not meant to be, however, as at last report an Osprey appeared to be incubating on the nest. The only known active eagle nest in the region, at Iroquois NWR, appeared to have at least one nestling by the end of the period.

Shorebirds made a good showing in the region as there was a lot of good habitat in flooded fields. In the Town of Allegany Eaton recorded ten species over three days including a first CATT Ruddy Turnstone. Eleven species were also recorded at the location previously mentioned where the Ruff and Reeve appeared. Tonawanda WMA, perhaps the only regularly productive spring shorebird spot, was good again, with Wilson's Phalarope highlighting the list.

Although the May passerine migration was poor there were a number of great finds making for an excellent spring overall. The best of the best was a cooperative *Tricolored Heron*. This is only the second record in the Region, the first being in 1959 on the Allegany River 20 May. A very rare dark morph Red-tailed Hawk of the race *B. j. calurus*, though this bird reported annually at Braddock Bay, is one of very few Regional records. Other highlights not mentioned above include Snowy Egret, Glossy Ibis, Greater White-fronted Goose, Northern Goshawk, Merlin, *Sandhill Crane*, Whimbrel, Com. Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, "Lawrence's" Warbler, late and possibly nesting Pine Warblers, and Western Meadowlark.

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Abbreviations: BSL - Batavia Sewage Lagoons; BOSAC - Buffalo Ornithological Society April Count, 10 Apr; BOSMC - Buffalo Ornithological Society May Count, 15 May; EA - East Aurora ERIE; INWR - Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; NR - Niagara River; TNP - Tiffitt Nature Preserve, Buffalo; TWMA - Tonawanda WMA; WG - Williamsville Glen ERIE.

Spring reports: **Red-throated Loon:** *intro*. **Com. Loon:** max 241 Allegheny Res CATT 3 Apr. **Pied-billed Grebe:** arr Buffalo 24 Mar (MD). **Horned Grebe:** *intro*. **Red-necked Grebe:** *intro*. **Double-crested Cormorant:** *intro*. **Am. Bittern:** max seven TWMA 14 May (WD, MT). **Least Bittern:** arr TNP 14 May (D&DS). **Great Egret:** arr two INWR 23 Apr (PB); five other reports involving six birds, a good showing. **Snowy Egret:** Motor I, NR 28 May (WW), not quite annual. **Tricolored Heron:** one TNP 8-20 May (Becht!). **Glossy Ibis:** TWMA 21-23 May (D&MJ!, WD!, WW!, D&DS!); an ibis species INWR 28 May was likely the same bird (WD!, BP). **Tundra Swan:** 44 T Dayton, 340 Salamanca, 22 Buckhorn Is. SP, 50 Eggertsville ERIE 13 Mar, first big movement; INWR 23 May, late. **Greater White-fronted Goose:** *frontalis* T Dayton 13 Mar (BS!); four *flavirostris* T Newstead 26 Mar (D&DS!), one INWR 27 Mar INWR (PY!, BH), and one T Yates 8, 9 Apr (MM!, WW!); unprecedented showing. **Snow Goose:** max 36 T Yates 23 Mar; very few away from Lake Ontario plain this season. **Green-winged Teal:** max 60 T Somerset

& Yates 9 Apr. **Blue-winged Teal**: *intro*. **N. Shoveler**: arr 15 TWMA 25 Mar (LH); max 30 BSL (WL). **Gadwall**: arr two Buffalo 24 Mar (MD). **Eurasian Wigeon**: T Darien GENE 10 Apr (TH!); Buffalo 25 Apr (MD!, WW!, RBr!). **Canvasback**: max 2000+ upper NR 13 Mar (D&DS); BSL 27 May (WL), late. **Ring-necked Duck**: two BSL 27 May (WL, FN), late. **Greater Scaup**: 300 BSL 12 Apr (WL), good inland count. **Oldsquaw**: 14 CATT 26 Mar (BS), good inland count. **Black Scoter**: none. **Surf Scoter**: none. **Ruddy Duck**: arr Celoron CHAU 25 Mar (RS, TMa); max 31 Lewiston Res 19 Apr (DR).

Turkey Vulture: *intro*. **Osprey**: arr Allegheny Res 31 Mar (TB). **Bald Eagle**: *intro*. **N. Goshawk**: T Hamburg 14 Mar (FR!); T Yates 26 Mar (WD!, BP); INWR 21 Apr (RA!, FR); T Ward 21 Apr (EB), a previous nesting site. **Red-shouldered Hawk**: scarce. **Broad-winged Hawk**: scarce. **Red-tailed Hawk**: dark morph T Yates 9 Apr (MT!, BP, WD'A!). **Merlin**: T Hamburg 23 Apr (RA!); TNP 6,7 May (MD!, D&DS!); only reports. **Peregrine Falcon**: imm T Randolph 8 Apr (TB!); ad Times Beach, Buffalo 19 Apr (MM!); EA 29 Apr (LH!); TNP 14 May (D&DS!); BOSMC; a good showing. **Sandhill Crane**: T Yates 9 Apr (MT!, WD!, BP). **Upland Sandpiper**: arr two T Dayton 1 May (BS). **Whimbrel**: two BSL 27 May (WL, FN), rare. **Ruddy Turnstone**: one CATT 15 May (SE), county first. **White-rumped Sandpiper**: arr T Yates 15 May (RBr!, WW!); TWMA 30 May (WW); only reports. **Pectoral Sandpiper**: max 58 Conewango Valley WMA CATT 3 Apr. **Dunlin**: arr three T Yates 27 Apr (WD, BP); max 53 TWMA 20 May (WW, MD). **Ruff**: *intro*. **Short-billed Dowitcher**: three TNP, seven BSL, one TWMA 20 May, only reports. **Wilson's Phalarope**: T N Collins 14 May (RA); TWMA 28 and 30 May. **Little Gull**: max 12 BOSAC; last Dunkirk Harbor 2 May (BC). **Com. Black-headed Gull**: two ad NR mouth 20 Apr (GB!), latest in spring and first ever in Apr. **Bonaparte's Gull**: max 13800 NR mouth 20 Apr (GB), great numbers following dismal fall showing. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: ad Beaver I SP 13 Mar (D&DS!), "very dark-mantled, possibly a race other than *L. f. graelsii*". **Caspian Tern**: *intro*. **Forster's Tern**: Lewiston NIAG 10 Apr (MM!).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: arr T Wales 27 May (WD). **Snowy Owl**: T Porter 3 Apr (WD, BP), only report. **Long-eared Owl**: Four Mile Creek SP 5 Apr (BP); two Wilson-Tuscarora SP 14 Apr (BP); one CATT BOSMC, very rare inland. **Short-eared Owl**: T Somerset 29 Mar (PH); T Porter 10 Apr (WD, BP); only reports. **N. Saw-whet Owl**: two Wilson-Tuscarora SP 23 Apr (BP); one ALLE BOSMC, rare away from Lake Ontario plain. **Red-headed Woodpecker**: Lakeside Beach SP 21 Mar (WL), may have overwintered; arr three Point Gratiot CHAU, one T Somerset 30 Apr.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: only two reports. **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**: arr Goat I 15 May (WD, BP, DD); WG 16 May (PY); only reports. **Cliff Swallow**: max 100+ T Red House 20 May (TB). **Com. Raven**: three T

Farmersville 20, 23 May (BC!), a new location. **Carolina Wren**: down after two hard winters. **Winter Wren**: arr WG 3 Apr (PY). **Am. Pipit**: max 66 T Dayton CATT 3 Apr. **N. Shrike**: last T Somerset 6 Mar (WD, BP).

White-eyed Vireo: Goat I 2-8 May (BP, DR); T Newfane 11 May (GR); T Oakfield 11 May (GS). **Philadelphia Vireo**: arr EA 12 May (LH). **Red-eyed Vireo**: Golden Hill SP NIAG 26 Apr (WD!, BP), earliest ever. **Blue-winged Warbler**: arr T Amity, EA 27 Apr. **Golden-winged Warbler**: arr Goat Is. 6 May (BP). **Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler**: "Brewster's" type T Alden 11 May (GR), T Hanover 20 May (RB), T Somerset 28 May (GR); "Lawrence's" type Allegany SP 7, 21 May (BS, TMa), back for a second year. **N. Parula**: Buffalo 29 Apr (MD!), earliest ever. **Chestnut-sided Warbler**: Fort Niagara SP NIAG 28 Apr (RA!), ties record early. **Cape May Warbler**: last INWR 20 May (WL, FN). **Yellow-rumped Warbler**: arr WG 3 Apr (PY). **Pine Warbler**: one-two T Farmersville 20-27 May (BC!), late, ?nesting. **Prairie Warbler**: one-two T Amity 5-27 May (VP); T Ellicottville 27 May (PY, BC); previous nesting areas. **Palm Warbler**: last WG 19 May (PY). **Cerulean Warbler**: arr EA 12 May (LH). **Prothonotary Warbler**: INWR 13-30 May, only report. **Louisiana Waterthrush**: arr T Carrollton 20 Apr (SE). **Connecticut Warbler**: one Wilson-Tuscarora SP NIAG 15 May (DS!); Allegany SP 22 May (TB!, SE, BS). **Com. Yellowthroat**: Buffalo 11 Apr (MD!), earliest ever. **Hooded Warbler**: arr Allegany SP 7 May (BS).

Am. Tree Sparrow: last T Cambria 11 May (DR). **Field Sparrow**: arr T Amity, T Alfred 6 Apr. **Grasshopper Sparrow**: arr three T Clarence 1 May (MG); four other reports 25-31 May. **Vesper Sparrow**: max five T Randolph CATT 3 Apr. **Fox Sparrow**: T Great Valley 1-20 Mar (BS!), arr in Feb. **Lincoln's Sparrow**: last TNP 22 May (MM). **Swamp Sparrow**: arr TWMA 1 Apr (MG, GR). **Lapland Longspur**: T Somerset 12 Mar (WD), only report. **Snow Bunting**: last and max 850 T Somerset 12 Mar (WD, BP). **E. Meadowlark**: arr T Otto, T Randolph 13 Mar. **W. Meadowlark**: T Ripley 26 Apr (RS). **Yellow-headed Blackbird**: male T Ward, ALLE (VP!). **Rusty Blackbird**: last four T Tonawanda 19 May (WW). **Orchard Oriole**: pair T Porter 14 May (BP, DD); T Sheridan 22 May (CB); T Somerset 28 May (DC). **Pine Grosbeak**: two T Aurora 3 Mar (RA), only report. **Red Crossbill**: two CATT BOSAC, only report. **Com. Redpoll**: strong return flight start 26 Mar; last 10 T Wales 25 Apr (OR). **Pine Siskin**: one report Mar, three reports Apr, four reports May; last Lancaster 30 May (MM). **Evening Grosbeak**: last ten T Darien 17 May (TH).

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